

One of Guatemala's Indians

HIS WITCH DOCTOR
AND A TORN TRACT

By
W. C. TOWNSEND
Antigua-
Guatemala

Missionary of
**The CENTRAL AMERICAN
MISSION**
PARIS, TEXAS



A Guatemalan Indian

Silverio Lopez was just an Indian, one of the "beasts of burden" of Guatemala. He lived in a little thatched hut in Santa Catarina, just $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Antigua, the ancient capital of Central America. Like the rest of his people, he farmed a few little squares of land scattered over the hillsides, thus securing enough corn and beans to keep himself and family alive. Any spare time was spent either in forced and unpaid service to the government or in laboring on the plantations of the coast at a wage ranging from 10 to 20 cents a day. Money thus earned went to buy clothes or should have, had not Silverio been a confirmed drunkard, here again like most of his race. In one way, however, he was an exception. He had learned to read and write.

DARKNESS

Now children in an Indian home often get sick due to poor food and exposure, so that the death rate among them is simply appalling. One day, Silverio's little daughter took sick, or rather it came on to her gradually. Her little stomach swelled up all out of proportion while the rest of her body became thin and she lost all desire to work or play. The age-long custom of his people dictated that he consult a witch doctor. The sage instructed him to buy candles and burn them before certain images at different Romish shrines. For two weeks he labored, spending 200 pesos, the sum total of his capital. In spite of all the father's efforts and the medicine man's best enchantments, the child died. One hundred pesos more were required for her burial. These he borrowed from the witch and later paid them back by 18 days of hard labor. He was a disgraced Indian, but later when another child took sick in the same way, he went again to consult a witch doctor, only this time he sought out a different one. After receiving her fee, she made use of her black arts and found out that the spirits of all the child's ancestors had gotten into its stomach, causing it thus to swell. The expense connected with the charms

which would drive them out would be great and the father didn't feel prepared to meet it. Rather, a woman who sold rum at a corner saloon was consulted and for 10 pesos, she rubbed oil on the little stomach, which gave some temporary relief. Soon the trouble was just as bad, however, and the case was put into the hands of the first witch doctor. He again prescribed candles and Silverio started over to Antigua to buy them.

LIGHT

On the road over occurred an incident which transformed his whole life and was instrumental in changing the lives of hundreds more of his tribe, the Cachiquels. Let us remember that though he was following the customs of his people yet it was under protest. The medicine men had done nothing for him except take away his scant earnings, and a spark of rebellion had found lodgment in his bosom which needed only the incident we are going to relate to fan it into a flame. Along the wayside, he saw pieces of torn paper. Curiously he picked up a bit and read: "My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves." Matt. 21:13. That was all he could make out, but it was sufficient. The Sword of the Spirit had struck home in his heart. What a wonderful Book is the Bible, given by our all Wise God so as to fit all the needs and conditions of humanity. This Indian had found just what he needed in less than a score of its inspired words. "A den of thieves" kept running over and over in his mind. Surely it referred to the witch doctors and their co-conspirators, the priests. They certainly had robbed him and he was only one of multitudes of victims. Lest there might be some mistake, however, he would look it up in the Book which he had bought many years before in the Capital, because of its cheapness and its bright blue binding. The man who had sold it to him said that it was the Word of God, but the priest condemned it, saying that it was written by heretics. He had studied it some, however, and had never found anything bad in it. At any rate, he would see if it contained this verse. He returned home with his candles and the bit of paper. By the light of

a pine torch that evening he pondered over the heretic's Book until the verse cited on the torn slip was found. Jesus Himself had said it, and it must be true. He was sure of it. The priests and the witch doctors had possession of the temples and they were thieves. They certainly had robbed him. He would look elsewhere for help. For his child he would go to a drug-store in Antigua. To know more about the Wonderful Book he would inquire at the Mission in that town. For only a few pesos the druggist gave him medicine for stomach worms which proved very effective and the child got well. Going to the Mission was more difficult, for everyone said that the people there had horns, hoofs and tails and sold men's souls to the Devil, but everyone also said that they knew all about that Book and he thought if people lied so about the Book which he knew to be good they must also have lied about those who preached it. He mustered up his courage and went. The pastor received him gladly and told him all about how the Son of God had borne his sins on Calvary's Cross and that if he would but believe he would be saved. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Yes, God loved even poor Silverio, Indian though he was, and would place the Holy Spirit in his heart to give him joy and peace and cleanse him from all his vices, if he would but believe on the Lamb of God. What a wonderful message it was! Never before had he heard anything like it. Why of course he would receive such a Saviour and witness for Him before men, even though all his people should make fun of him for it.

MUCH FRUIT

Overjoyed, he returned to his village. The following days were spent in studying the Wonderful Word together with a few friends who had become interested. One by one, they too, believed. In a group they would attend the Sunday services in Antigua, always trying to take some new interested one along. People soon heard about it, and it was even more

clearly evidenced by their lives, for they no longer drank, smoked nor swore, neither did they consult the witch doctors, nor worship the images. Surely they had become bewitched and could no longer belong to the tribe. Persecution ensued and had not the Government protected them they might have been driven from their homes. Don Catarino, a chief from the neighboring town, San Antonio, who had also believed was expelled from his office. One night many of them were put in jail and their Books taken from them. They spent the long hours in song and prayer until morning when the higher officials than the Indian mayor ordered their release. But with it all, the church grew and after four years now numbers almost 100 members. Many of their number have gone out to tell the Glad Tidings to other Indian villages. A few, including Silverio, are giving their full time to this work. Hundreds of Indians have been saved through their ministry. The Central American Mission has established a station in their town where the missionaries are learning their language and teaching them more of the Sacred Scriptures. A day school has been established for the children, also a workers' training school is held nine days each month. The principal saloon of San Antonio has been purchased and turned into a chapel which is crowded to its limits every Sunday. Some medical work has been done, which has opened the door of many an antagonistic home to the Gospel. Many out-stations have been planted throughout the mountain towns and hamlets far and near. These are cared for by a dozen faithful Indian preachers. Many doors of opportunity are opening for the future.

WORKERS TOGETHER

The person who prayerfully composed the tract, the Christian tither who sent money to the Bible House of Los Angeles which had it printed and mailed to Central America; the colporteur who there endured hardship and abuse to put it into the hand of an Indian only to see it fanatically torn to bits; and the missionaries and workers who watered and nurtured the

seed, as they all together prayerfully labored and trusted in the promise, "My Word shall not return unto Me void," each one shall share in the glorious result. Did it not pay? Wonderful recompense, indeed! May our faith not be greatly quickened in the divinely inspired Word and may we not become more and more earnest in prayer and work to see that it is proclaimed unto ALL creatures? The command to us is: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel." His promise is: "AND I, IF I BE LIFTED UP WILL DRAW ALL MEN UNTO ME."

John 3:16 in Cachiquel

"Roma achehel xrajo Dios ri ruva chulef chi xuya ri juney ru G'ajol, chin conojel ri achique xtiniman rija, manek xtisach ta, mas g'o rugaslen eterna."

The Indian dialects of Guatemala are unwritten languages. A few months ago a translation was made of the story of Christ's death and resurrection as told in Mark, into the Cachiquel tongue. The missionaries hope to get out as soon as possible an entire Gospel. Translations must be made with parallel readings, in Spanish and Indian, which makes it more expensive. 150,000 to 200,000 Indians speak the Cachiquel language. Surely it is worth while to reach them.

Those interested in giving this portion of God's Word to the Cachiquels in their own tongue should communicate with The Bible House of Los Angeles, 702 Knickerbocker Building, Los Angeles, Calif.

Those interested in general mission work in all Central America should communicate with

Central American Mission,
Paris, Texas.